

A SPIRIT FILLED WALK

Ephesians 5:15-21

Intro: It appears obvious from reading and reading Paul's epistle to the Ephesians that he was actually leading up to the passage we have before us today. As we have seen, his emphasis in the practical section of the epistle, beginning with chapter 4, has been upon their walk, their conduct, the way that all Christians should live. For the most part his emphasis has been positive, but in one case he warned them not to walk, or live, like other Gentiles were living who did not know the Lord. And there is even one mention of the walk in the earlier part of the epistle which is mainly doctrinal. Let me review those passages with you so we can all have the references fresh in our minds. There are seven of them in all, but in one verse there are two:

- 1) Eph. 2:2. (Explain them all in order.)
- 2) Eph. 2:10.
- 3) Eph. 4:1.
- 4) Eph. 4:17 (2x).
- 5) Eph. 5:2.
- 6) Eph. 5:8.
- 7) Eph. 5:17.

These verses alone should convince us that the Christian life is a supernatural life. By that I mean that we cannot do any of the things that we are told to do in Scripture IF we are relying on our own strength, or upon our own memory, or upon our own consistency, or faithfulness. But, what God commands us to do, He will enable us to do. And what He commands us *not* to do, He enables us *not to do that*. But if we are trusting in ourselves, we are going to fail. And we do fail for that very reason, that we are trusting in ourselves, but not in the Lord.

Now when I say Lord, I am not only speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am speaking of our heavenly Father, and from Ephesians I am speaking especially about the Holy Spirit. We have no excuse for our disobedience. I hope that we all understand this basic truth which we find in the Word of God, not only in Ephesians, but also in many other places. That which might well be considered to be the most important command in the book of Ephesians, is the one we come to this morning in verse 18, right at the end of the verse where we read, "be filled with the Spirit." Of course Paul was speaking about the Holy Spirit, One of the Three Members of the Godhead. The verb which the Apostle Paul used here is a command

in the second person plural, so it means that Paul was writing to all of them. As you can see in our English Bibles, it is an imperative, meaning that it is a command. But it is also passive meaning that I don't fill myself with the Holy Spirit, and you don't fill yourself with the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit fills all of us with Himself *when we meet the proper conditions*. And what Paul was talking about here was not an event that takes place now and then, but a relationship with the Holy Spirit that is continuous, and therefore increasing in its influence in our lives. This is not a relationship that was meant to be unusual among us who are Christians, but this is the normal Christian life.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and went back to heaven, He has been sending the Holy Spirit into the life of every child of God, and He is there to stay with us forever. You don't have to pray for this. It is a part of our salvation, and this was a big part of what the Lord Jesus told His disciples when they were with Him just before His arrest and crucifixion. The people who say that we have to pray for the Holy Spirit to come to us, don't know their Bibles as well as they should.

Now Paul, throughout this epistle has been telling us how we are to walk, how we are to live, how our lives are to show that we really have been saved. Now in the verses we are looking at this morning, Paul tells us how we all can walk, can live, as the Lord wants us to live, and it is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was not describing some kind of a super Christian (because there is no such a person), but he was describing normal Christian living. Probably the reason we look upon a Spirit-filled Christian as someone special (if we know how to identify one who is filled with the Spirit), is because so little is known these days about what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Now I want you to anticipate what is coming in these words, "be filled with the Spirit," as we go back to verse 15 to see what Paul meant when He said, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." What does this mean?

I. ANOTHER COMMAND: "WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY" (Eph. 5:15-16).

I remember when we used to ride trains more than we do now, that when you were ready to get on the train, on the steps leading up into the train you were faced with three words, "Watch your step." It meant that every-

one getting on the train was to be careful, to pay attention to what they were doing. You could easily stumble or miss a step because you were not being careful, and you could hurt yourself if you fell getting on the train.

The word “circumspectly” is a good translation of the word Paul used here. It means to look around, make sure you know what you are doing, and that you are going where you want to be going. To use the figure of speech the Paul has used throughout this epistle to speak of how we should live, that of walking, as you walk anywhere you want to be careful that you don’t trip over anything, or slip and slide so that you fall. I remember as a child when I would slip on something, or trip over something, my Dad would say to me, “Why don’t you watch what you are doing?”

This is how we need to live as Christians, with our eyes wide open, making sure that we don’t make any mistakes in how we are walking. We are to be careful that we don’t make any unwise or foolish mistakes. Instead Paul said that we are to redeem the time. We need to make the best use of our time. Time can never be given back to us. We can make foolish mistakes (and we all have), and do things that we can never undo, especially because we are living in “days” that are “evil.” What Paul was saying is that we live in times, in a world, where the prevailing influences that we run into are to drag us down and to take us away from a life that is pleasing to God, and glorifying to His Name. As one of our hymn declares, “this world is not a friend to grace.” Living in this evil world we are constantly tempted to do the wrong things, to think the wrong things, to say the wrong things, to read the wrong things, to watch the wrong things, to go the wrong places, to make the wrong friends. Dr. Chafer said in his commentary that to walk “circumspectly,” “the Apostle calls again, for the seventh and last time in this Epistle, for a holy walk which is circumspect or punctually accurate in doing in every particular only that which is pleasing to God” (p. 148).

Now there is only one way that we can be sure that we are walking circumspectly, walking carefully, walking to do what is pleasing to God. This brings us to verses 17 and 18.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE WILL OF THE LORD (Eph. 5:17-18).

If we are going to be wise in the way we live in this world, we must

understand what the will of the Lord is. God has given us all a conscience to help us in this. We can thank God that we were created by and infinitely wise and holy God, not the product of an evolutionary process. And we are responsible to that omnipotent, omnipresent God. To fear Him, to fear the consequence of displeasing Him, and for those of us who love Him, to fear that we might do anything contrary to His will, ought to be our primary concern. But where do we find the will of God. Do we find it through the majority vote of people? That would lead us farther and farther from the Lord. Do we depend on others to tell us? No because most people would probably tell you that you have the right to do anything that you want to do, and anything that you can do. That is a case of the blind leading the blind, and both are going to end up in the ditch of shame and disgrace before men as well as before God.

Where do we find the will of God? There is only one place of which we can be absolutely certain. It is on the pages of the Bible, the Word of God. If you want to find out what pleases God, as well as what displeases Him, it is all in your Bible. I don't think that anyone can say for sure why the Apostle Paul said at this point, "and be not drunk with wine," unless he was pointing to a sin which many people engage in, and which sometimes overtakes even a Christian, which will lead you to do and to say and to go into situations where you are oblivious to the consequences of what you are doing.

Instead of being filled with wine (or anything else which will do to you what wine will do), "be filled with the Spirit." In the beginning of my message today I stressed the importance of this verse, as probably the high point of Paul's practical exhortations in this epistle. And I hope that you remember that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not something that you and I do; it is what the Holy Spirit does. But we have a responsibility in making sure that, by the grace of God, and only by the grace of God, we meet the conditions.

As most of you know Lucille and I have had the joy this weekend of having most of our family together. They have come to help us celebrate our wedding anniversary. Frank is at the airport right now getting ready to fly back to Orlando. Carolyn will be here until tomorrow. And then Dwight and Nancy leave on Tuesday. In one of the times I was talking with Dwight, he asked me what I would be preaching on this Sunday, and I told him this passage in Ephesians 5, verses 15-21. I mentioned in particular, the filling of the Spirit. He said to me something like this: "Do you

remember that years ago you spoke on that passage when we (meaning himself and Nancy, with their children) and you told us to turn to Paul's epistle to the Colossians as you explained what it meant to be filled with the Spirit?" I knew immediately what he was talking about, and I want all of you to see what I told those dear people at Coast Bible Church that day.

I said something like this immediately following what Paul said after he gave the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he said, "Speaking to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual psalms." That is what Paul told the believers at Colosse to do in Colossians 3:16, the latter part of the verse. But instead of saying before that, "Be filled with the Spirit," and then "speaking to yourselves . . . , he said what we find in the first part of Colossians 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . ." So what does this teach us?

You will remember that I said that it is the work of the Spirit to fill us with Himself, but we have a responsibility to see to it that the conditions are right for such a fulness of the Spirit in our lives. Our responsibility is to make sure that "the word of Christ" is dwelling richly *in us, that we are reading it, delighting in it, obeying it, perhaps memorizing it, the more the Word of God is dwelling in us, the more we will realize and understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit. And what a difference this will make in our lives!!!*

But how do we know that the Spirit of God is filling us, controlling us, and working in us to make us a holy people—holy in our lives, holy in our talk, holy in our character. Paul tells us in the final verses of our text for this morning. Is it speaking in tongues? It used to be, but no longer. Is it in physical healing? It used to be, but we don't see miracles today like the people saw it in the days of our Lord's ministry on the earth, or in the days of the apostles which followed. No, Paul has given us three evidences of a Spirit filled life and walk in verses 19, 20, and 21.

III. THE EVIDENCES OF A SPIRIT FILLED LIFE AND WALK (Eph. 5:19-21).

The first evidence is the joyful singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (v. 19).

But this is not for entertainment; this is for worship. "Psalms" are the Psalms that we find in Scripture. "Hymns" by definition have to do with

songs which have God as their object. “Spiritual songs” are songs in harmony with the truth that the Holy Spirit has given us in the word, and which are designed for the blessing of the Lord’s people and their growth in the Lord.

In our singing we are speaking to one another, and we are at the same time “making melody . . . to the Lord. But it must come from our hearts. The more of the Word we get in our hearts, the more we will understand what Paul’s words here mean.

The second is thanksgiving. Notice how dominant this will be in our lives – “always for all things.” That is all-inclusive, isn’t it? The more the Word gets into our hearts, the more prominent thanksgiving will be in our lives, and not just thanksgiving, but *thanksgiving to God*. People will often say that they are thankful for this or that thing in their lives, but we need to make God the object of our thanks giving.

The third evidence of a Word-filled, Spirit-filled life, is submission. This is one of the major evidences of humility. We through the Word grow in our understanding of God and His glory. And that always affects our relationship to each other. Submission the one to the other is evidence of humility. It is placing ourselves under each other. The more we know of God, the less we think of ourselves, and the less we think of ourselves, the more inclined we are to let others have their way.

Concl: Next week, the Lord willing, we are going to be thinking about the special places each of us has in this evil world in which we live. This includes wives, husband, children, parents, servants, and masters. These are areas which can be of great blessing to us, making life worth living, or they can be of great conflict, keeping us from the blessing the Lord wants us to have. But these matters come at the end of the practical section, not at the beginning, or even in the middle. Their place in Ephesians and Colossians assumes that we have first established a solid relationship with God, with our Lord Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit. And with that spiritual support, then and only then can we be what God wants us to be in our relationships with one another. If we have trouble with people, it is always an indication that things are not as they should be in our relationship and fellowship with God.

From what we have seen in the Word this morning, I trust that all of us will be looking for ways to getting the Word dwelling more richly, more fulling in our lives, that we may know more of the fulness and blessing of the Spirit of God in our walk with God and with each other.